

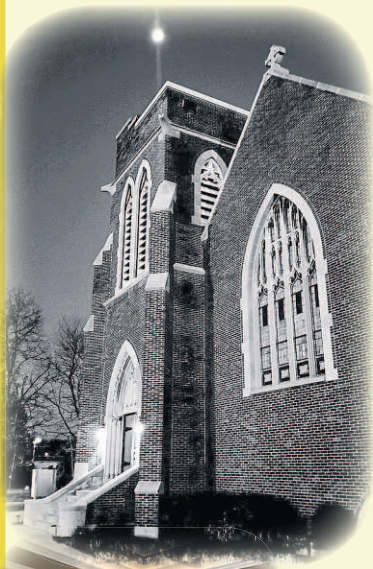


Bridal Dreams

Inside - Ways to beat the post-pandemic rush, Your guide to finding a dress online, Tips on finding the right florist, One-stop wedding planning in Wabash, Northern Indiana outdoor, indoor venue ideas

A special supplement to the Marion Chronicle-Tribune, Huntington Herald-Press, Wabash Plain Dealer, Peru Tribune and Frankfort Times

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Lauren Catey Dillon and Jem Dillon stand in the barn at Catey Heritage Farm ahead of their own wedding.

Wedding venues await post-pandemic rush

Planners offer tips on wedding planning during global health crisis

By JARED KEEVER
jkeever@perutribune.com

After nearly a full year of postponed weddings, wedding venue owners and managers say they are expecting a rush of business as the coronavirus pandemic eases.

But just what that business looks like, and when it might start remains to be seen.

"There is definitely a bottleneck," Dave Van Baalen told the Peru Tribune.

Van Baalen is owner of the Riverview Event Center in Peru, a home to many area weddings and receptions. He is also looking to open a new wedding venue in downtown Peru in the building that was once home to

Holy Trinity Anglican Catholic Church — a property he bought in 2020 and is refurbishing.

An owner or partner in several area businesses, Van Baalen said places like the event center took quite a hit, not just from wedding cancellations, but from graduation parties and other events that the pandemic forced to be put on hold.

He said it is hard to say how fast all of it will come back, but there is at least a sense among some that there is a pent up demand.

Some things he's read, he said, suggest that there will be a flourish of business when those cancelled events try to reschedule alongside the newer events that have been

planned in the interim.

“They are predicting ... that it could be looking like the Roaring Twenties,” he said. “I don’t know.”

That full optimism doesn’t seem to have reached couples quite yet.

Holly Zorn, the event coordinator at Riverview, said wedding dates aren’t really filling up for spring and summer, suggesting that people are still anticipating restrictions just a few months out.

“Kind of like September, October it seems like everybody is going to feel more comfortable,” she said.

Lauren Catey Dillon, who hosts weddings in a refurbished barn and on the grounds of the Miami County farm that she runs with her husband, Jem Dillon, said she is seeing something similar from those looking to book the property.

“We are definitely seeing a lot of people interested in dates later (this year),” she told the Tribune this month.

Though she’s hosted a few weddings during the pandemic, and expects to host a few more before life returns to normal, Zorn said she senses a hesitancy on the part of couples who don’t know what to expect and want answers.

They want to know if they book a wedding at a certain date, how many people will be allowed to attend and what other restrictions will be in place, she says. Those are things that are directed by the state and local health departments depending on the level of virus spread in the community.

“It’s hard for me to say,” Zorn said.

She recommends building two guest lists in case a surge imposes restrictions just days before an event.

“I’d definitely have one list of people that you fully want there,” she said.

One trend that Catey Dillon said she is seeing avoids that sort of awkward planning all together.

Some couples are just opting for elopements or what are being called “micro-weddings” of 20 people or fewer.

It’s leading to much more “scaled down” affairs that tend to be more local in nature.

“I think our space is especially suited for that,” she said.

The ones that are planning larger affairs remain upbeat, even if they can’t get all of their concerns addressed up front, Zorn said. And others appear focused on pragmatism, pushing their timelines out a little further.

“The ones that moved from last year to this year are pretty positive,” she said. “The ones that are checking in are looking for next year.”

Zorn said she tries to accommodate everyone and their needs, including making sure that elderly family members who are most at risk during the health crisis can still view festivities via video conferencing software.

“It’s just heartbreaking, grandparents can’t come,” she said. “You just want everybody to have memories.”

Vaccination efforts, she hopes, will likely ease some of those burdens as the year wears on.

“I think it may relax people more,” she said.



TOP AND BOTTOM RIGHT: The Riverview Event Center in Peru sits decorated for a wedding reception.

Submitted Photo

BOTTOM LEFT: Dave Van Baalen stands in the nave in what was once Peru’s Holy Trinity Anglican Catholic Church in January. The Miami County businessman bought the church in 2020 and is refurbishing the building to reopen it as a wedding venue later this year.

Photo by JARED KEEVER // jkeever@perutribune.com

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Ways to find the right dress and skip the line

Tips for online shopping and repurposing vintage dresses amid a pandemic

By **ANDREW MACIEJEWSKI**
amaciejewski@chronicle-tribune.com

With limited capacity and high demand at dress shops across the country, many brides are finding ways to skip the lines during the pandemic to find the perfect dress.

Brides-to-be are dusting off vintage dresses, eyeing their mothers' gowns and shopping online to avoid the crowds, but taking a nontraditional approach can be stressful at times. A local seamstress with more than 40 years of experience making, altering and repurposing dresses in Marion, Indiana has seen it all and offered some advice on finding the right fit.

Chris Purdom has made wedding dresses



from scratch, has helped breathe new life into family heirlooms and has ran a successful alterations business since 1977.

"The first and most important step when

finding a dress," she says, "is to consult with a seamstress or tailor as soon as possible to work out the details and find someone who you can trust to make alterations to your gown."

Whether you are doing online shopping or wanting to use a vintage dress, a seamstress needs to see the dress to understand what kind of fabrics are involved, especially if it is an older dress. Some seamstresses are even willing to check out a dress found online before a bride clicks the checkout button.

"A lot of people shop online now, and my biggest suggestion is to be measured professionally before you order a dress and always go a size up because they rarely come in fitting perfectly in your size," Mrs. Purdom said regarding online shopping. "You just have to be so careful ordering online. There is nothing wrong with it, but oftentimes the measurements, especially if it comes from a foreign country, which a lot of them do, is not a true measurement. That can really be a problem."

Mrs. Purdom said there is a difference between wedding dress sizing and buying day-to-day clothes from retailers. She said it is always easier and cheaper to buy too large, within reason, than to buy a dress that is too small.

"The thing is that it is easier to go down a size than to have to try and figure out how to go up," she said. "If there are not a lot of wide seams to let things out or if it is beaded, it becomes more difficult to alter. It is much

easier to make something smaller than it is to make it bigger."

Making a dress larger entails finding the right color and kind of fabric to make the dress look seamless, which can be difficult if there is a lot of lace or other ornamental aspects to the dress. Mrs. Purdom said she has taken a dress down from size 16 to a size six without issues, but adding inserts can add time and cost to alterations.

"If you are trying to go up in size and you cannot find fabric that matches to put inserts in, it becomes a bigger challenge," she said. "It is preferable, and it looks nicer, to not have to piece the dress together."

Mrs. Purdom also said brides-to-be should take the style and types of fabric of the dress into consideration when shopping online. Some alteration shops will add fees to work with fabrics like chiffon, since it is delicate and difficult to work with, and some shops will not touch a dress with chiffon at all. Other dresses, if they have a lot of beading or tulle, can also be more costly to alter.

"One thing that can become very time consuming is when a bride buys a dress with a lot of tulle, like a great big Cinderella-type dress. Those have many layers so sometimes you are cutting off several layers of tulle along with all the underlining of the dress. So you are talking about a lot of hours of cutting and hemming since those dresses very full."

Special attention should also be directed to the bodice of a dress, especially if it is beaded.

"Especially on the bodice (the top area of the dress), if you are going to have to take that up, and it is heavily beaded, then there are challenges a lot of the time," she said. "It gets to be a very time intensive, and expensive, alteration."

Mrs. Purdom said there are always ways to make these alterations work, so it should not scare brides as they shop, but things that add time come with a higher price tag. She said oftentimes a seamstress will work with a client to make sure things stay within budget. The biggest thing is to do consultations early.

"Early consultation becomes even more important if brides want to walk down the aisle in their mother or grandmother's dress," Mrs. Purdom says. Some seamstresses will not work on dresses that have too many



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Tools for keeping wedding guests informed

By METRO CREATIVE

Weddings give couples an opportunity to share the joy of joining their lives together with a host of friends and family members. Guests liven up the party and help make the celebration that much more memorable.

According to The Knot 2019 Real Weddings Study, the average wedding in the United States hosts 131 people. Data indicates this number has been slowly decreasing over the years, after the average wedding size reached an all-time high of 153 in 2007. No matter how big or how small the guest list, keeping guests informed of what's happening regarding the upcoming nuptials is a courtesy couples can provide. Couples can explore various avenues for keeping guests informed and ensuring they'll be able to take part in the festivities.

Save-the-date announcements

Save-the-date announcements have become an increasingly popular component of wedding planning. Instead of waiting on the wedding invitation, which traditionally arrives one or two months prior to the wedding itself, save-the-date cards provide guests with an advanced advertisement of the celebration to come. According to the photo and invitation specialists at Shutterfly, it's customary to send save-the-date notes around six months before the wedding. For a destination wedding, which will require

previous alterations, but Purdom says she is a seamstress who enjoys the challenge.

"For me, I like the excitement of a challenge. One way or another, I figure out how to make it work," she said. "That's what makes my job fun."

Mrs. Purdom said it is important to bring the dress in well in advance of a wedding to make sure the bride's vision will work, even though the alterations will likely be done closer to the wedding.

Sometimes the fabric can degrade if it is too old, but she said there are always ways you can incorporate a family heirloom into the dress a bride wants to walk down the aisle in. Sometimes the fabric, if the dress has not been preserved or has not been well-taken care of, the fabric can start shredding during an alteration. Some of it may



Gettyimages

extra travel plans, an eight- to 12-month advance can be helpful.

Save-the-date cards generally have basic information, including the wedding date and the venue. Many will feature a photo of the couple as well. If you're planning on sending save-the-date announcements, coordinate with your photographer to have a photo taken exclusively for these cards.

Wedding website

Couples are increasingly embracing technology as they plan their weddings. Brides magazine states that, during the typical 15-month engagement period, 48 percent of couples will launch a wedding website. A wedding website is a versatile tool that can

even just disintegrate. "So they have to be aware that there may be problems that arise," she said. "Sometimes you have to add new to the old to get the outcome in the dress that you might want."

Mrs. Purdom has also found ways to incorporate old dresses into new dress designs, like a time when she cut out a decorative motif from a mother's wedding dress and sewed it onto the daughter's dress.

"Sometimes I've even cut a heart out of a grandmother's wedding dress and sewn that on the bodice on the back side, close to the bride's heart," she said. "There is always a way to somehow incorporate a vintage dress. I've used lace or other sentimental pieces from a mother's dress too. There is usually some way to figure out how to incorporate something into the dress."

reception.

Wedding websites also can be used as fun ways to keep guests engaged. "Throwback Thursday" photos or funny memories and anecdotes can be included.

Video conferencing apps

As the world continues to adapt in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, video conferencing applications like Facetime, Zoom and Microsoft Teams enable people involved in the planning process to routinely "gather" and go over details about the wedding, helping to limit in-person meetings as much as possible. These apps also can prove invaluable when conferring with wedding vendors, such as florists or musicians.

You also can schedule smaller meetings with specific guests who may be playing key roles in the wedding, such as those giving speeches, doing readings, escorting guests, or serving in other capacities.

Certain resources can help couples keep guests informed about what's to come in regard to their weddings.



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Photo provided

The Old Gray Barn is one of several popular wedding destinations in Clinton County.

Clinton County's wedding destinations

By KARA KAVENSKY

Clinton County, with a population of 32,000-plus, has become a popular destination for weddings. The newlyweds flock from around the region to say, "I do," and are doing so in record numbers.

During the pandemic, outdoor venues

became even more in demand to accommodate social distancing. The wedding tide has not receded during the colder months, with nuptials taking place in airy, well-ventilated venues.

The "country" wedding is still trending, and there are plenty of options for those who may prefer a more traditional venue to celebrate.

All of these venues are dedicated to creating wonderful experiences for their guests. Regardless of desired aesthetic, Clinton County offers a stellar list of venues for any special event worth celebrating, especially weddings:

The Silver Coin Wedding & Event Manor

20 to 400 guests

The mother-daughter team of Angela and Mackinze Isgrigg started the Silver Coin Wedding & Event Manor to formalize their passion for event coordination. The charm of The Silver Coin Wedding & Event Manor is a mash up of industrial meets vintage. The glass industrial garage doors open to an outside sitting area complimented by a grand Swarovski Crystal chandelier in the middle of the event space. They have a custom buffet and bar area that adds a vintage look.

Adjacent to The Silver Coin is The Coin House, offering on-site lodging. In the house are two salons, and the garage next door is the groom suite.

The Old Gray Barn

Up to 250 guests

This family-owned venue resides on over 40 sprawling acres. The barn is



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surrounded by lush green grass and seasonal blooms. There is a quaint little chapel in the woods, and in the summer, sunflower fields and find the cozy meadow in the woods centered on the large red cedar chapel. The Old Gray Barn is ADA accessible, has air conditioning in the downstairs, plenty of bathrooms and bridal and groom suites.

The before and after shots of the Old Gray Barn are worth checking out on their website.

The Willow Creek Barn

Up to 250 guests

The Willow Creek Barn became a venue by demand. Once Jeremy and Andrea Corbin moved into their home, they had several people inquiring about renting their barn for weddings.

"After some convincing, we agreed that it would be a nice wave to ride," says Jeremy Corbin of their decision to rent the barn for special events.

The barn itself is quite rustic and was built in the 1800s. Adorned with 1400-plus lights, vintage trucks, rustic wagon and willow trees, the venue offers amazing picture opportunities around their grounds, including a picturesque pond setting (which keeps the roots of the willow happy).

"We want the venue to be a blessing to our community," says Corbin. "We are all for partnering with local vendors to provide everything the bride would need. We have a large family, recently welcoming our ninth child, and all the kids enjoy helping out in some capacity."

51 West

Up to approximately 200-plus guests

When Jill Snyder opened 51 West, there were few options in Frankfort. 51 West offers an open vendor policy for caterers, DJs, photographers, etc. The main, unique feature of 51 West is their grand ballroom.

Snyder's passion for preserving history shows in her usage of reclaimed and repurposed materials from other historical buildings in Frankfort to finish out 51 West.

Arborwood by Shoup's

25 to 300 guests

The grounds of Arborwood was originally a country club. The area is now reimagined to host a variety of events, including weddings. The Shoup family business revolves around farming, and



Photo provided

Rural settings with barns and large outdoor spaces like that shown here at Willow Creek have become a popular choice for wedding venues.

thus food. Their Shoup's Country Food, Inc. has expanded to catering and experienced the natural progression into event coordination.

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Silk vs. fresh blooms: Finding the right fit for your special day

By **ANDREW MACIEJEWSKI**
amaciejewski@h-online.com

A Huntington bride fell in love with peonies. She always dreamed of having them in her bouquet when she would walk down the aisle.

Unfortunately, the ephemeral flower blooms in April and disappears by June. Decades ago, this would have been a major problem, but thanks to advancements in silk flowers, her dream came true.

"We were able to find a high-quality permanent botanical, and we were able to mix in the fresh and silk flowers. I don't think anyone would have guessed that that's what was done," said Huntington florist Jeannie Myers, owner of Town & Country Flowers. "She was so astounded... If I hadn't told her, she may not have known without touching the flower."

The key, Myers says, is to find a florist who has experience in the field and a wide array of options to meet any specific need. Sometimes fake flowers can be used to keep things within budget, but sometimes you can find permanent botanicals that will make you do a double take.

"That's a cool thing you can offer and do. Sometimes it's cost effective to do permanent botanicals, but sometimes those are more expensive because you are looking for something that is of superior quality, which you're going to pay just a little bit more for those," she said. "Sometimes we think of fake flowers or silk flowers as being less expensive so it would be cheaper to do them, and that's not always the case if you're wanting to make it look realistic."

Myers said permanent botanicals can help solve a lot of problems that may arise during the wedding planning process. Flowers will wilt in hot or cold temperatures, and sometimes flowers are out of season. Some brides even choose permanent botanicals if they want a few bouquets to keep as momentos.

No matter what vision a bride has, an experienced florist can turn their dream into a reality.

"The key to that is using quality flowers. You want to be cautious about where you're finding those permanents," Myer said, adding that most florists have sample flowers in their store for brides to check out. "We have a couple vendors that just do an awesome job for us."

Meyers said it's a florist's job to listen and educate brides on some common problems that may arise based on their specific plans and circumstances.

"Most of us who are planning our wedding, this is not something we've been thinking about for a week. Sometimes girls have thought about this for years and years, and they have this perception in their minds," she said. "I don't like to tell them what to do. I think this is the key to most businesses. You want to find a professional that speaks clearly to you, someone you feel confident in. You want to find someone who listens to what you're looking for, and then let them



guide and direct you along the way."

Part of a good relationship with a florist is making sure you have details nailed down before you walk into a consultation. Myers said while everyone is motivated by price and budget, brides should be more focused on what they want to achieve, since most florists can provide guidance on keeping things within budget.

How many bridesmaids and groomsmen will there be? Do you want daisies, carnations, hydrangeas, lilies, roses? How many flowers do you want in your bouquet? What will the conditions be like at your venues? Do you want to keep anything past your wedding day?

"There are so many questions that go into answering the question of how much will my wedding cost," she said, saying she's done weddings as small as \$50 and as large as \$10,000.

Brides want to ask about whether consultations are free. Myers said her shop offers free consultations, but some shops require a fee.

With the pandemic going on, it's also important to ask about cancellation policies.

Myers said cancellations have happened before due to restrictions brought by the novel coronavirus. She said they were close to putting on a large wedding last spring when all of the sudden, things got shut down.

"That was disappointing because there was a significant



amount of planning that was at no charge to the bride, and all of that went away because the wedding was then canceled," she said. "They just did a very small parents and bride and groom wedding."

She said she's seen a trend toward smaller or outdoor weddings, which are all big factors in planning for botanicals. Finding the right florist can be key.

"I think it comes down to the overall theme of what you're looking for. Obviously I think it's hugely important that you have a bouquet to have to signify that day. To me, I think it completes the look of the bride, but again it comes down to the personalization of the ceremony you're looking for,"



Gettyimages

Features to look for in an outdoor wedding venue

By METRO CREATIVE

Many couples on the cusp of getting hitched are looking to do so in the great outdoors.

Nature took center stage at weddings in 2020, as many couples moved their ceremonies outdoors to adhere to government guidelines issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Couples considering outdoor venues for their weddings can look for certain features that can make the big day as special as it is safe.

■ **Backdrop:** An awe-inspiring backdrop, whether it's the natural beauty of a mountaintop or a beach with the sound of ocean waves crashing into the shoreline, can make for great photos and a ceremony couples and their guests will never forget.

■ **Plan B:** Couples may work hard to ensure everything goes off without a hitch, but ultimately the elements are in control during outdoor wedding ceremonies. So couples hoping to host an outdoor ceremony

may want to look for sites that have a readily accessible indoor option just in case Mother Nature is not cooperating. Many reception venues are capable of hosting indoor and outdoor ceremonies as well as dinners, so this might be the best option for couples who want to have outdoor weddings during times of the year when weather is typically inclement or unpredictable, such as winter, early spring or late fall.

■ **Lighting:** What's awe-inspiring in person may be hard to capture on film. Couples may want to bring their wedding photographers along as they search for outdoor ceremony sites. Professional photographers can help couples determine which sites will make for great photos and which ones might make it hard to capture the beauty of the site's surroundings.

Outdoor weddings are wildly popular. Couples who find outdoor ceremony sites with certain features may rest easier knowing they and their guests are safe and sound no matter what Mother Nature has in store come the big day.

Myers said. "Having someone who is willing to sit down and listen to you to find out what your dream ceremony is like."

Myers said sometimes brides don't have a full picture of what they want their special day to look like, so speaking with a florist as early as possible can really help them find the right fit.

No matter which direction a bride goes,

Myers said nothing beats a bouquet of fresh blooms.

"Flowers always bring specialness to an occasion, no matter what the occasion," she said. "Think if you met that special lady and you take her flowers. Oh my goodness, that just ups the ante right there because flowers are specials, and fresh flowers are even more special."

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Helping couples say 'I do' during a pandemic

Pandemic transforms Wabash into 'wedding destination town'

By **ROB BURGESS**

rburgess@wabashplaindealer.com

Honeywell Center vice president of hospitality Afla Irani remembers the exact date when everything changed last year: March 13, 2020.

It was Friday the 13th, to be exact.

"We were sitting down and looking at of these things and that's when everything kind of boiled up to the surface..." said Irani. "We had to stop everything starting March 14."

But, despite the obvious challenges involved in planning a wedding during a pandemic, several local businesses are working hard to help cultivate Wabash as a "wedding destination town" in 2021.

In January, the Honeywell Foundation launched their wedding brand, Honeywell Weddings, and at the start of February a group of local vendors launched Wed

Wabash.

Ellen's Bridal & Dress Boutique owner Lisa Downs said the seed of Wed Wabash was planted by "Small Business Revolution," which filmed a season in 2017 in Wabash.

"When they were here they believed and inspired in us that Wabash is really a wedding destination town where you could celebrate all things related to a wedding," said Downs.

The website gathers together vendors including gowns, gentleman's attire, alterations, venue, transportation, beauty, catering, dining, floral, accommodations, entertainment, photography and videography.

"A bride can just find anything she needs to plan any of those events," said Downs.

Similarly, Honeywell Foundation public and marketing coordinator Morgan Ellis said Honeywell Weddings sought to be an all-inclusive venue experience. Locations available include the newly-renovated Eagles Theatre, Charley Creek Gardens, Honeywell House, Honeywell Center and the 13-24 Drive In.

"Couples looking for a romantic and charming wedding experience with afford-



Provided photo by Autumn Howell Photography

Locations available through Honeywell Weddings include the newly-renovated Eagles Theatre, Charley Creek Gardens, Honeywell House, Honeywell Center and the 13-24 Drive In.

able elegance can look no further than Honeywell venues. All five venues provide the same exceptional quality and charm found in historic wedding destinations – including North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia – for a fraction of the cost," said Ellis.

Irani said the variety of space they have available usually means they can accommodate events anywhere from 50 to 350 people.

During a normal year, Irani said they would have 10 to 12 inquiries in December and January. But, this year they've had 22, half of which have already booked. And that was not counting Valentine's Day.

"I'm sure there was a lot where people kind of either held back and didn't make any plans in 2020 just waiting to see where we go with this pandemic," said Irani.

Irani said the challenges of planning weddings during a pandemic were two-fold. The first was spacing the tables 10 feet apart. And the second was to restrict the number of people at each table.

"It's a family unit. We always mention that to everybody. Whatever party you're in, those are the people you can sit with," said Irani.

Irani said they kept the maximum of guests per table at six, rather than the eight or 10 they usually would.

Irani said ever-changing restrictions on crowd sizes has been an obstacle because weddings are complicated and time-sensitive than other events.

"People don't decide things a month in advance. Some people decide a year in advance, planning and sending out invitations and so on. But that's kind of been a challenge for the brides more than us, because they've



Provided photo

Ellen's Bridal & Dress Boutique owner Lisa Downs said some couples have opted for a very small ceremony on their original wedding date and then planned a first wedding anniversary party that will be the full-on wedding and reception.

got to kind of figure out who I'm going to invite and who I'm going to cut," said Irani.

Downs said they were telling brides to "just plan as if it's going to happen."

"We'll assess restrictions about two or three weeks out and make changes that we have to make," said Downs.

Downs said, unfortunately choosing between a wedding with a smaller guest list now or holding out for the possibility of a dream wedding a year from now was a real question in 2021.

Downs said some couples have opted for a very small ceremony on their original wedding date and then planned a first wedding anniversary party that will be the full-on wedding and reception.

"It's working well because you don't have the stress of the wedding, you just get to go party and have a good time," said Downs, "and wear your dress again."

For more information about Honeywell Weddings, call 260-563-1102 or visit HoneywellWeddings.com.

For more information about Wed Wabash, visit www.wedwabash.com.

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